

Emergency Cold Weather Energy Assistance

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible for the emergency cold weather energy bill assistance?

Anyone who is currently eligible for the energy assistance program, up to 175% of the federal poverty level, is eligible for additional assistance. The benefit is for utility customers and will be applied directly to the utility bill – no cash is provided directly to the client.

Income Eligibility

Effective July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014

Household Size	Maximum Monthly Gross Income Standards
1	\$1,675.62
2	\$2,261.87
3	\$2,848.12
4	\$3,434.37
5	\$4,020.62
6	\$4,606.87
(for each additional person, add \$586.25)	

How much will individuals receive in cold weather energy bill assistance?

Additional assistance is dispersed on a weighted benefit based on household income level:

	Percentage of Poverty	Benefit Amount
Level 1	0% to 75%	\$240
Level 2	76% to 110%	\$192
Level 3	111% to 150%	\$108
Level 4	151% to 175%	\$96

How should I apply?

If you have already received or applied for your benefit since July 1, 2013, you **do not** have to do anything else -- the additional benefit will be applied automatically to your account. All new applications that are determined to be eligible will receive the normal benefit plus the additional grant. As is currently the case, you can apply in person at local offices or at community partners statewide. You may also apply online through DHRs SAIL system or by mail.

<https://www.marylandsail.org/>

When will I receive the additional funds?

For those who have not yet applied, processing times will remain the same. If you have already applied, you should see the additional grant applied to your utility account within several weeks.

What is the source of the funds being used?

There are several sources of funds that have contributed to the Department of Human Resources' (DHR) ability to provide this benefit including a higher than anticipated award from the Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) as well as an increase in proceeds to Maryland from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

What if the cost exceeds \$20 million?

The Department always budgets for a small surplus in case of an emergency and to ease the transition into the following year's heating season. These carryover funds would cover the cost of any overage.

Has DHR provided for additional staffing for this effort?

Yes. DHR will provide additional staffing to implement this cold weather benefit and process additional applications.

What if I am not eligible for state energy bill assistance, but currently have financial difficulties paying my utility bill?

Talk to your utility provider now—don't wait. They have various programs and payment plans that will help you get back on track and keep your home heated the rest of this winter.

How is this winter different than previous winters in terms of temperature and energy usage?

Energy demands this winter have created a tremendous strain on Maryland families.

- The average temperature at Baltimore-Washington International Airport in January 2014 was 27 degrees – compared to 35 in January 2013. In Hagerstown, the difference was even more dramatic, with an average temperature of 25 degrees in January 2014 versus 34 in January 2013.
- Because of these colder temperatures, the amount of electricity used by an average house in some Maryland utility territories increased significantly over this same time last year. Depending on the type of fuel and the model of furnace, the usage could increase as much as 50%. Stated another way, when the temperature outside goes lower, it takes more energy to maintain the same temperature inside your home. This is why a customer's bill increases during the winter even though the home thermostat stays constant or is lowered.
- Increased energy use can translate to an increase in energy bills – from an average of 7% in some utility areas to 30% or more in others.

If citizens want to donate to Marylanders in need, is there an opportunity to do so?

Yes. Most utilities have their own programs for customers to donate monies. Additional, the United Way of Central Maryland has created a simple way for Marylanders to “give the gift of energy” by donating to programs that provide assistance to pay utility bills. To donate, visit www.uwcm.org/winter2014 or call (410) 895-1566.